sustainable thriving achieving

East Dunbartonshire Council

www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk

Naming electronic records and version control

Purpose of this guidance

As part of the Council's Information Management strategy we will be developing corporate and service specific file naming protocols that can be applied to electronic files regardless of their location including shared network drives. This will be a long term project, implemented in priority-based phases. In the meantime, this guidance will help Services to improve information sharing within their teams and lay good practice foundations for this longer term information management improvement initiative.

Why do we need naming conventions?

Using standard terms and following consistent rules for how we name files and folders has a number of benefits for everyone:

- groups related records and documents together in a logical order
- saves time naming files and searching and browsing for the information we need
- helps identify the most current version of a document
- helps identify obsolete, superceded and out-of-date documents

Naming files – basic rules

The file name should provide a quick signpost to what is contained within a file and help to distinguish between documents on the same topic. When naming a document, think about whether someone in 5 years will be able to work out what it is about just from looking at the title as they may be using it in an entirely different context from the one you created it for. The following rules will help you achieve these goals.

1. Provide short, meaningful titles

The title should be short and meaningful and contain, at a minimum, the following elements:
- Subject – what the document is about e.g. the "subject" of this fact sheet is "naming conventions".
- Document type – e.g. minute, report, invoice or, in this case "fact sheet".

Depending on the content and context of the document, you should include additional information
e.g. for correspondence:
- Date – the date sent or received – use date format YYYYMMDD (refer to point 6)
- Outgoing correspondence – "to" and recipient name – enter surname then initial (refer to point 8)
- Incoming correspondence – "from" and sender name – enter surname then initial (refer to point 8).

e.g. for documents going through a review and approval process e.g. policies, reports, meeting minutes
- Status – e.g. draft, copy, final
- Version number – e.g. V0-1, V2-1

2. Avoid unnecessary information

People often include information in the file title that is unnecessary or automatically captured elsewhere:
In the first example the folder is called "Court" so it is not necessary to include the word "Court" in the file name because all the records in that folder are Court records

e.g.	**Correct**	**Incorrect**

/.../Court/20041030Minutes.rtf   /.../Court/20041030CourtMinutes.rtf

- o avoid words that add no value to the title meaning e.g. "a", "the", "of"
- o so long as the file remains in its current parent folder, do not repeat information already sign posted in the folder name.
- o do not include creation or modified date as this information is automatically captured in the properties of the file.
- o do not include the file type as this indicated in the file extension and icon.

3. Use capital letters to separate words, not spaces or underscores
There are a number of reasons for this rule:
- A space or an underscore is a character and increases the length of the file name.
- When a file name is converted to a hyperlink, spaces are converted into %20%
- Some applications do not support spaces

File names should be written in lowercase, starting with a Capital, which is used to separate each word.
e.g.   FileNamingConvention.doc

4. Avoid the use of non-alpha numeric characters

File names cannot include any of the following characters as they are not recognised in file names by Windows and some document management systems. Even if Council systems allow you to save the file, if you send it to someone outside the Council, they may not be able to open it:

/ | \ : > ; , < ? * ",.
Hyphens and underscores can be used, although they will lengthen file titles.
Dots/full stops should only be used to separate the file name from the file extension and not used within the title. Including dots within the title can cause problems when migrating the file into certain information management systems. Most non alpha numeric characters can be omitted without loss of meaning.

Correct	**Incorrect**
SmithJohn20070507.txt	Smith,John20070507.txt
GuidelinesAndRegulations.pdf	Guidelines&Regulations.pdf

5. Agree standard terms for consistency
Each Service should compile a list of standard terms (including abbreviations and acronyms) to ensure consistent terminology is used for the names of committees, organisations, activities and subjects. Avoid unnecessary repetition and redundancy in file names and file paths. This increases the length of file names and adds time to the retrieval process.

6. Use of dates
If dates are used in folder or file names, always state the date 'back to front' and use four digit years, two digit months and two digit days: YYYYMMDD or YYYYMM or YYYY or YYYY-YYYY.

This example shows the minutes and papers of a committee. By stating the year 'back to front' the minutes and papers from the most recent meeting appear at the bottom of the directory list.

Correct	Incorrect
20040324Agenda.rtf	1Feb2005Agenda.rtf
20040324Minutes.rtf	1Feb2005Minutes.rtf
20040324PaperA.rtf	24March2004Agenda.rtf
20050201Agenda.rtf	24March2004Minutes.rtf
20050201Minutes.rtf	24March2004PaperA.rtf

7. Use of numbers
When using numbers in titles, work out the highest number that will be required and use the following format so they are listed numerically –
Up to 10 – 01, 02, 03 ...10
Up to 100 – 001, 002, 003, ...033, 034, ..099, 100 etc..

8. Personal names
When it is appropriate to include a personal name in the file title (e.g. correspondence, appraisals) it should be given as surname first followed by initials as it is most likely that the record will be retrieved according to the surname of the individual.

Surname	• Enter prefixes such as O' (without the apostrophe), Von, Van as part of the surname. • Enter Mc or Mac as they are spelt. • Enter surnames with hyphens as whole units, e.g Smithers-Brown becomes SmithersBrown
Forename(s)	Enter only initials, unless the combination Surname+Initial already exists. In this case, enter the full forename.

9. Naming Folders
The names given to folders should enable the viewer to instantly identify the contents within the folder. Ideally your Service should develop a standard, controlled folder structure for any shared drives. For more information on structuring and managing shared drives see the *Structuring and Managing the Shared Drive* guidance on the *Information Management* section of the Hub When naming folders you may have spaces between words but no dashes, commas, abbreviations or jargon.

10. Order of Elements in a File Name
The elements to be included in a file name should be ordered according to the way in which the record will be retrieved during the course of everyday business. This very much depends on the way you work. For example, if the records are normally retrieved according to their date, the date element should appear first. If the records are retrieved according to their description, the description element should appear first

Correct	Incorrect
/…/Events/	/…/Events/
GardenParty20040630.rtf	20030304WeddingDinner.rtf
ProcurementAward20040905.rtf	20040630GardenParty.rtf
WeddingDinner20030304.rtf	20040905ProcurementAward.rtf

This example shows the file names of the files in the Events folder. Because events are likely to be retrieved by the name of the event rather than the date of the event, it is most useful to have that element first.

Version Control

Some records go through a number of versions, starting out as working drafts and then moving on to a review and approval process prior to release as a finalised record. It is important to be able to differentiate between these various drafts, using a consistent version numbering protocol at the end of the file name. Avoid using common words such as 'draft' or 'letter' at the start of file names, unless doing so makes it easier to retrieve.

Here is an example of a simple protocol for version control:

- o Draft documents - V0-1; V0-2; V0-3 …
- o Approved document – V1-0

When an approved document then moves into a new review phase e.g. annual review of a policy,

- o Documents under review: V1-1; V1-2; V1-3 …
- o Approved updated document: V2-0

The document control history of more formal review processes should also be documented within the content of the document, ideally using a formatted document template.

The version number of a record should be indicated in its file name by the inclusion of V, followed by the version number and where applicable 'Draft' or 'Final'.

This example shows two versions of the income and expenditure attribution model for 2003-2004, version 3 is a draft version and version 4 is the final version. The common abbreviation for the model is used. The covering years are given in four-digit format. The version number is given with two digits so that the versions will appear in numeric order.

Correct	**Incorrect**
IEAM2003-2004V03Draft.htm	Iemodel0304_draftv3.htm
IEAM2003-2004V04Final.htm	Iemodle0304_finalv4htm